

Erdington Academy

Kingsbury Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B24 8RE

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The rate of pupils' progress, based on GCSE results, including in English and mathematics, declined and was low in 2018.
- The progress of pupils whose first language is English was especially low in comparison with similar pupils nationally.
- The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) at GCSE is very low; few of the pupils spoken to were positive towards French as a result of the variable quality of teaching.
- There is too much variability in the progress current pupils are making across different subjects.
- Pupils new to English are expected to work alongside pupils with challenging behaviour whose needs are very different to their own.
- There is variability in the quality of teaching. In too many instances, teachers teach to the middle, leaving some pupils to finish work quickly while others get stuck. Some teachers do not adapt their plans to meet pupils' needs accordingly.
- Work is not sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils and they do not make as much progress as they should from their above-average starting points.
- Too often, opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas in discussion and debate are shut down too quickly.
- Pupils do not consistently know how they are doing or how to improve their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are increasingly rigorous in tackling underperformance and are taking effective action that is leading to improvements in teaching and outcomes.
- There is now stronger leadership in English, mathematics and science.
- Arrangements to ensure pupils are kept safe are very thorough.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective.
- Pupils' behaviour has significantly improved and is of a high standard in almost all subjects.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very extensive.
- There is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values.
- Governors have challenged leaders over recent pupils' outcomes and are actively involved in the school, focusing on areas for improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - current pupils are progressing as well in modern foreign languages and humanities, music, business studies and computing as they are in other subjects
 - the progress of pupils whose first language is English at least matches that of all pupils nationally
 - most-able pupils make rapid progress based on their previous high attainment.
- Improve teaching and learning, by ensuring that:
 - teachers adapt their planning during lessons to respond to pupils' different needs
 - work set for most-able pupils is sufficiently challenging
 - teachers do not close down debate and discussion if these are relevant to pupils' learning
 - the school's expectations for target setting are consistently applied, and in a way that ensures that pupils clearly understand how they are doing and how they can improve their learning
 - teaching is consistently good in modern foreign languages to encourage a higher take-up at GCSE
 - good practice in teaching in the very best subjects is shared more widely in underperforming subjects.
- Review the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, including:
 - the small-group curriculum provision for pupils new to English
 - the quality of provision for the large number of intermediate and more advanced learners who speak English as an additional language who are in mainstream classes
 - arrangements for the leadership and quality assurance of the impact of training on lessons taught by mainstream teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They recognise that teaching is not yet good enough. However, they are demonstrating their strong capacity to improve further. This is demonstrated by the impact of actions taken to date and their plans to strengthen further the leadership team through partnership with the trust and the appointment of more trust-wide subject leaders. The trust, too, has an accurate view of the school and is taking robust action to strengthen leadership further.
- Senior leaders and governors know that standards and progress were not good enough in 2018, especially in modern foreign languages and humanities, resulting in a significant drop in overall progress compared with the previous year. They have analysed the factors behind this and taken urgent action to address identified weaknesses.
- There have been a number of changes in leadership. Leaders have been rigorous in improving leadership in underperforming subjects. As a consequence, the quality of teaching and progress is improving for current pupils.
- Strong leadership has led to significant improvements in the behaviour of pupils, and in the ethos around the school, which is calm and quiet. The rate of exclusions has fallen significantly. Leaders set very high expectations around behaviour and conduct, and pupils have responded well to these raised expectations. Pupils spoken to, especially the older ones, noted a 'sea-change' in the behaviour of pupils in school.
- Pupils have also seen improvements in the quality of teaching, which they attribute to the actions of senior leaders. The programme of 'teaching for excellence' has ensured that most teachers are now working at what leaders regard as an acceptable standard, which was confirmed by inspectors. A programme of training, coaching and support is leading to improvements. Teaching is not yet good because some improvements have been recent, and inconsistencies remain, including in the teaching of computing, modern foreign languages and humanities, where teaching does not match the high quality in other subjects.
- Strong leadership for pupils with SEND ensures that, as result of effective and personalised support, progress for this group of pupils is improving. Additional support in lessons and tutor time is tracked closely to ensure that it is having a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- There is a stronger team of middle leaders, including in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of recent changes to subject leadership, including in humanities.
- Pupils are offered a broad and balanced curriculum with a range of subjects on offer at GCSE and a choice of pathways, which include vocational courses. Take-up of modern languages at GCSE is low, however, as a result of pupils' lack of enthusiasm for French and the variable quality of teaching which leads to the school's low Ebacc entry. This is despite the school encouraging pupils for whom English is an additional language to take languages they can speak and write or others that they have previously studied.

There is a modest improvement in uptake among pupils who are following an Ebacc pathway.

- There are small groups of pupils in Years 7 and 8 who follow a full curriculum taught by a combination of subject-specialist teachers and additional adults. Some of the pupils in the group have challenging behaviour. New arrivals to the UK at an early stage of learning English who join in Years 9 to 11 receive a narrower curriculum than other pupils in key stage 4 do. Leaders have not yet fully evaluated the impact of this provision.
- Leaders track pupils on alternative provision closely to ensure that they are safe, attending regularly and receiving an appropriate curriculum.
- The range of extra-curricular provision is very extensive. For the small number of pupils with challenging behaviour or those at risk of disaffection, the clubs and activities are a successful way of re-engaging them and modifying their behaviour, for example by taking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and participating in sports teams. Pupils spoken to were very enthusiastic about the choices available to them, including sport, photography, cheerleading and many more. The proportion of pupils who take up at least one extra-curricular activity a week is very high at 85%.
- New leadership is ensuring that the school is now evaluating the impact of pupil premium spending more rigorously. The effective support that has been put in place has ensured that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving to be closer to that of all pupils nationally.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used effectively to ensure that pupils who have fallen behind in English and mathematics are given additional support to accelerate their progress.
- There is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values. This is apparent in assemblies and lessons and in the way pupils from different faiths and backgrounds interact with each other. During the period of Ramadan, staff are acutely aware of Muslim pupils fasting and are sensitive to their needs, for example during physical education lessons.
- The school engages well with parents and carers and the different communities it serves. This has led to an increase in the rate of pupil attendance. The overwhelming majority of the small number of parents who responded to Parent View were highly positive about the leadership and management of the school. Almost all said they would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors share leaders' view that the quality of teaching, and pupils' outcomes, are not yet good enough. They have challenged leaders during the year through meetings and visits to the school and have supported them in securing changes in leadership. They know where strengths and areas for development are across subjects. As a small team, they have prioritised their visits and meeting agendas on improvement areas identified at the start of the academic year, including humanities. There has also been a strong focus on pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

- Governors are thorough in checking and reviewing the school's procedures for safeguarding and ensuring that leaders meet all their statutory duties.
- Governors do not check the school's website closely enough. They were unaware at the start of the inspection that the website did not meet a number of the recommendations made by the Department for Education (DfE) for what academies should publish. These oversights were rectified by the end of the inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and well managed. There is a safe environment in school. Leaders are engaged in extensive preventive work. They are well trained to fulfil their responsibilities. Up-to-date policies are in place, which take full account of the latest guidance. There is an additional policy for peer-on-peer abuse. Records are well organised and kept fully up to date. Leaders work well with outside agencies, including the police and social services. They respond promptly to any issues as they arise, and referrals are made in a prompt fashion.
- Parents responding to Parent View reported overwhelmingly that their children feel safe in school. Pupils spoken to also said that they feel safe. Staff spoken to knew the routines for responding to a safeguarding concern, including to whom they should report their concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders' monitoring of teaching indicates accurately that, although it is improving, it has not been good enough over time and inconsistencies still remain in some subjects, including modern foreign languages, humanities and computing.
- Where teaching is not yet good, teachers plan lessons that are pitched at the middle. When this happens, all pupils are set the same amount of work at the same level of difficulty despite their different starting points. As a result, some most-able pupils finish questions quickly and then relax and mark time while others, who find learning difficult, get stuck and cannot complete the work.
- Despite teachers checking on pupils' progress as they move around the classroom, the extent to which they adapt their lesson plans varies. Some are confident at adapting the learning, while others remain bound by their plan and move to the next stage in the learning before some pupils are ready. Pupils are expected to move on to the next stage in their learning without having fully understood the previous work. As a result, too often, work in pupils' books is incomplete.
- Mainstream teachers have received good-quality training for teaching pupils who are learning English as an additional language, including about the different needs of beginners compared with advanced bilingual learners. However, the extent to which subject teachers employ the strategies they have been given varies considerably.
- Much of the support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is targeted at the small withdrawal groups, so that the large numbers of intermediate and advanced bilingual learners in mainstream classes have less specialist support.

- All pupils' books across a range of subjects have target sheets and half-termly progress measures inside the front cover. The extent to which these are filled in and used by teachers to plan the next steps of learning varies. Pupils spoken to too often did not understand what the letters and numbers meant and whether they were on track or not.
- At times, pupils are set low-level tasks that do not enhance their progress, for example copying explanations and sentences from the board or cutting up pictures and words to be matched up.
- Lessons are highly planned and follow a clear structure according to a model set by leaders. For example, most teachers follow the guidance on the use of targeted questions well. This enables pupils to demonstrate whether they have understood the concept or need further reinforcement. When teachers follow this structure effectively, they take full account of pupils' prior learning. However, some follow these plans too rigidly and, in these instances, pupils' learning is not checked carefully enough.
- Pupils spoken to recognise this structured model for teaching set by leaders, which is applied consistently most of the time. They reported that this has had a significantly positive impact on behaviour in lessons, as a result of teachers' increased skill and confidence in behaviour management.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and this enables them to respond well to pupils' questions.
- Much of the teaching in English, mathematics and science is consistently strong and, as a result, current pupils are making more rapid progress than previously. In English, for example, a lower set was being stretched and challenged to use academic language to describe characters from 'An Inspector Calls'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive in most lessons. There is a buzz, with debate and discussion, in English lessons which helps pupils to see both sides of an argument, for example whether GCSE examinations should be scrapped. Elsewhere, in other lessons, there are times when discussion and debate are closed down too quickly.
- Relationships between teachers, additional adults and pupils are consistently good.
- There is usually a strong focus on literacy in other subjects as well as English, although there are sometimes missed opportunities for extended writing.
- Additional support is deployed effectively for pupils with SEND. Education plans for pupils with specific individual needs set out clearly how teachers and additional adults can support them.
- Work set for pupils who are in the inclusion room as an alternative to exclusion is monitored and tracked closely, but at times is not sufficiently challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- During the inspection, pupils were learning about and demonstrating values of respect and tolerance in a house assembly. This promotion of tolerance was confirmed in subsequent discussions with pupils and in observations where pupils from different faith and ethnic backgrounds showed respect for each other.
- Pupils reported that there is now a lack of bullying in school. There had been incidents previously. Consequently, pupil anti-bullying ambassadors have been established and a peer-to-peer abuse policy drawn up. Pupils reported that staff and other pupils are very approachable if they have any worries or concerns. They spoke of the school as 'a family'.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, entitled 'The Edge', covers appropriate and relevant issues, including finances, consent, health, smoking and drugs. The extent to which pupils are given the opportunity to express their views and discuss these issues varies from class to class, however.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning across a range of subjects. However, very few of the pupils spoken to in Year 8 were enthusiastic about taking French at GCSE from Year 9 onwards.
- Independent careers advice provides pupils with high aspirations and a range of career paths suited to their needs and interests. Advice is impartial. Role models of past pupils are on display, including those gaining places at Oxford or Cambridge University. There are good links with local companies, such as Jaguar Land Rover. Every pupil who left Year 11 in 2018 went on to further education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and when moving around the school, including in narrow corridors. In lessons, there are positive attitudes to learning almost all of the time.
- There has been a significant fall in the rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, including for pupils for who speak English as an additional language. This is as a result of the high expectations of leaders and a more consistent approach to behaviour management by staff. Exclusion is seen as the last resort, if other measures have not led to improved behaviour.
- Pupils spoken to agreed that behaviour is good and that it had improved 'dramatically'. Pupils know teachers' expectations of behaviour in lessons and the very large majority abide by them consistently. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that behaviour is well managed.
- Leaders' approach to improving attendance is rigorous. Pupil absences are tracked closely and followed up promptly.
- Very good relationships with parents and local community groups ensure that the level of attendance is high and persistent absence is low for all groups of pupils. There is a culture of zero tolerance towards term-time holidays.
- There is a calm and orderly environment in school, as well as in the inclusion room where pupils with challenging behaviour have been placed.

- In some lessons, where the work is not sufficiently engaging or challenging, pupils are quiet, compliant and passive.
- An exception to the high standards of behaviour is in the small 'skills' groups, comprising pupils new to English and those with challenging behaviour. Here there are instances of low-level disruption.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Attainment and the rates of progress for pupils at GCSE in 2018 were below average and well down on the previous year's broadly average results. Progress was below average in English, mathematics and science and especially low in humanities and modern foreign languages.
- In 2018, pupils who speak English as an additional language made better progress at GCSE than all pupils nationally and other pupils in the school. However, their progress was not as good as other pupils nationally who speak English as an additional language.
- Most-able and disadvantaged pupils made less progress than all pupils nationally in 2018. The number of pupils on the SEND register in Year 11 last year was too small to report on their progress.
- Current pupil performance information presented by the school by subject and year group indicates that the proportion of pupils making good progress has risen significantly, but there remains a tail of underperformance, where pupils have not made enough progress. This view was confirmed during the inspection by the scrutiny of work in pupils' books.
- Progress in music, business studies, computing, geography, history and French remains low compared with other subjects. However, pupils are making stronger progress than previously in a number of other subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- The progress made by current disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is improving towards that of other pupils in the school as a result of improved leadership, more closely targeted resources and evaluation of their impact.
- Leaders recognise that pupils with previous high attainment are still not making as much progress as they should when compared with other pupil groups in school. This is a key priority for them.

School details

Unique reference number	143413
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10088461

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	883
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms M Atack
Interim Head of School	Simon Mallett
Telephone number	0121 373 1080
Website	www.erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@erdingtonacademy.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Erdington Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- There are 20 pupils who attend alternative provision.
- The school is a member of the Fairfax Multi Academy Trust, having converted to become an academy in 2016. The Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust is overseen by a board of directors. Each school's local governing body is known as the academy association

and has representatives from the school staff body, parents and members of the local community.

- The interim head of school has been in his current post since September 2018, as has the interim executive headteacher.
- The chair of the governing body was chair of the predecessor school and returned to the role in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons or parts of lessons, of which a small proportion were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made other short visits to lessons and other activities.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and scrutinised their written work in a range of subjects.
- An inspector attended two house assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the interim executive headteacher, the interim head of school and other leaders and members of staff, and spoke to two groups of pupils. An inspector met the chief executive officer of the trust and spoke by telephone to the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 38 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire and none to the staff questionnaire. There were also no responses to the Parent View free-text service.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised a number of documents, including those relating to the school’s self-evaluation, as well as minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement plans and school information on pupils’ recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information and policies and procedures relating to English as an additional language, special educational needs, pupil premium funding, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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